

What is claimed is:

1. A method of applying locking function to an electronic document on the Internet through a locking management server having a locked document storage means in which a locked document comprised of locking function selection region, a locking condition region, a locking guide message region, a hierarchy information region and an electronic document region, is stored, and a plain document storage means in which a plain electronic document is stored, comprising the steps of:

(1) preparing an electronic document; and

(2) reading the electronic document, wherein the step (1) comprises:

preparing an electronic document and storing hierarchy information;

determining whether locking function is applied to the electronic document or not;

enabling a locking condition and a locking guide message to be input if the locking function is selected;

storing the electronic document in the locking document storage means if the locking function is selected; and

if not selected, storing the electronic document in the plain document storage means, and the step (2) comprises:

determining whether the electronic document to be read by the reader is locked or not,

transmitting the electronic document to be read if not locked, enabling to input the

locking condition if locked,

allowing the reader to read the locked document if the locking condition is satisfied;

and

displaying the locking guide message if the locking condition is not satisfied.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of transmitting the electronic document from the locking management server to one or more destination servers, wherein the transmission is performed by determining whether the electronic document stored is locked or not, if not locked, transmitting the electronic document stored in the plain document storage means to a plain document storage means of the destination server, if locked, determining whether the destination server has a capability of providing locking function or not, if the destination server has a capability of providing locking function, transmitting the locked document from its locked document storage means to a locked document storage means of the destination server, and if the destination server does not have a capability of providing locking function, keeping storing the locked document in its locked document storage means and transmitting the site address of the locking management server to the destination server.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the condition for locking an electronic document is selected from the group consisting of the date on which the attached electronic document can be open, the specified reader, questions for quiz and combinations thereof.

4. The method according to claim 2, wherein the condition for locking an electronic document is selected from the group consisting of the date on which the attached electronic document can be open, the specified reader, questions for quiz and combinations thereof.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic document is selected from the group consisting of e-mail and message posted up on a bulletin.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein a reply from a certain reader to the message posted up on a bulletin is posted up in the order of hierarchy information stored in the hierarchy information region.

5 7. A locked document including an electronic document and a text message transmitted through the network, comprising:

a) a locking function selection region storing the information whether locking function is applied to the attached electronic document;

10 b) a locking condition region storing one or more conditions for locking the attached electronic document;

c) a locking guide message region storing a guide message presented when the locking condition specified is not satisfied.

d) a hierarchy information region storing hierarchy information; and,

15 e) a document region storing the document to be transmitted.

8. The locked document according to claim 7, wherein the locked document is selected from the group consisting of e-mail, message posted up on a bulletin and text message transmitted through mobile phone.

20 9. The locked document according to claim 7, wherein the condition for locking an document is selected from the group consisting of the date on which the attached document can be open, the specified reader, questions for quiz and combinations thereof.

10. A method of applying locking function to a text message transmitted and/or received between mobile phones connected by a mobile communication network, the method comprising the steps of:

a message preparing step of configuring a transmitter's mobile phone of the mobile phones such that a user who intends to transmit the text message selects a desired locking function among one or more locking functions and inputs locking condition information on the selected locking function, and attaching locking function indicating information and the locking condition information to the text message;

a message transmitting step of transmitting the text message prepared in the message preparing step to a receiver's mobile phone via the mobile communication network; and

a message reading step of checking whether the text message has the locking function set thereto if the text message received in the receiver's mobile phone is intended to read, receiving the locking condition information on the locking function or determining locking condition information if the locking function is set to the text message, and displaying the text message on the screen of the receiver's mobile phone only when the locking condition information is identical with that attached to the text message.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the message preparing step and the message reading step are performed by a text message management program loaded on the mobile phones.

12. The method according to claim 10, wherein a data region for setting the locking function includes a locking condition region in which the locking condition information on the locking function is stored, a guide message region in which a guide message to be

displayed when a trial of reading the text message is not successful, is stored, and a hierarchy information region in which the name of a user who read the text message is stored.

13. The method according to claim 11, wherein the message preparing step
5 includes:

storing drafter's name of the text message in the hierarchy information region;

supplying one or more text message locking functions to cause the drafter to select
the same;

processing the text message as a plain text message if no locking function is selected
10 by the drafter, or storing the locking function indicating information in the locking function
selection region if one or more locking functions are selected by the drafter;

processing the locking condition information corresponding to the selected locking
functions to be input if one or more locking functions are selected, and storing the input
locking condition information in the locking condition region; and

15 causing a guide message to be displayed when the text message cannot be read due to
the locking function set thereto, to be input if the locking functions are selected, and storing
the input guide message in the guide message region.

14. The method according to claim 12, wherein the message reading step includes:

20 checking whether there is a locking selection region attached to the text message to
determine whether locking function is set to the text message if there is a trial of reading the
text message;

performing a reading step of a plain text message if it is determined that no locking
function is set to the text message, or causing the locking condition information on the

locking function or determining locking condition information if the locking function is set to the text message;

checking whether the determined locking condition information is identical with that stored in the locking condition region attached to the text message;

5 processing the text message to be read if the two pieces of locking condition information are identical; and

processing the text message not to be read if the two pieces of locking condition information are not identical with each other, and displaying the guide message stored in the guide message region.

10 15. The method according to claim 14, wherein, if the text message is normally read and a reply text message is prepared, the message reading step further includes the step of adding identification information of a drafter who has prepared the reply text message, including drafter's name and ID, to the hierarchy information region attached to the text message.

16. The method according to claim 10, wherein the locking function is to specify a reading commencement date of the text message, including year, month, date, minute and second, and the locking condition information is the reading commencement date.

20 17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the message reading step includes further displaying a remaining time until the reading allowable time limit is reached together with the displayed guide message if the current date determined by the mobile phone itself is not identical with the reading commencement date attached to the text message.

